DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 374 SO 025 076

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TITLE Aboriginal Education and the Arts Policy (Draft).
INSTITUTION Australian Inst. of Art Education, Melbourne.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Institute of Art Education, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, GPO Box 252C, Hobart, TAS 7001.
PUB TYPE Guides - General (050) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reference Materials - Vocabularies/Classifications/Dictionaries (134)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Education; Cultural Differences; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Indigenous Populations
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This document outlines a policy for the art education of and about Aboriginal people. Teachers in art education should have an understanding of Aboriginal education issues, and developers of art programs should consult with Aboriginal people before beginning work on a program and continuously throughout development. Teachers should take into account differences in the preferred learning styles of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal artists should be encouraged within the teaching/learning environment. Art teachers should be aware of sensitive issues such as: authenticity, accuracy, and cultural specificity. Spiritual significance, correct terminology, and the meaning and translation of "The Dreaming" also should be considered by the art educator. (MM)

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ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND THE ARTS POLICY

(DRAFT)

Aboriginal education is both for and about Aboriginal people. Aboriginal art is both a part of Aboriginal education, and a part of Australian Art and Art education.

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PREAMBLE

The Australian Institute of Art Education has a commitment to ensure that art curricula consider Aboriginal education as part of all that is planned from early childhood through to tertiary education. An Aboriginal education policy in Art education is essential.

- Teachers in Art education must have an understanding of Aboriginal education issues within this area.
- Developers of Art programs must consult with Aboriginal people:
  - before beginning work on a program;
  - continuously throughout development;
  - at completion of the program;
  - during implementation; and
  - for evaluation purposes.
- Teachers in Art education must consider that Aboriginal students may have preferred learning styles, and that planning, learning and teaching approaches should take this into account.
- Aboriginal artists should be encouraged within the teaching situation, as role models for students.
- Art teachers should be aware of sensitive issues. These include:
  - **Authenticity**. Sand paintings, rock carvings, cave paintings and so on are ways of recording stories. They have only recently become known as "art". Some of these stories may have sacred or secret/sacred significance. For example, concentric circles, or concentric squares are particularly sacred to the people of the North West and West of South Australia.
    Accuracy. Although there are many similarities between groups of Aboriginal people, a general term such as "Aboriginal paintings" should not be used. It is best to name the group from which the artist comes, such as "the Winrajuri of Western New South Wales". Similarly, if a non-Aboriginal student completes an art work in the style of an Aboriginal artist, it cannot be termed "an Aboriginal painting".
    Cultural specificity. It is important that generalisation does not take place. It is wrong, for example, to allow students to assume that all Aboriginal people use the didjeridu and speak the same language, or to stereotype Aboriginal people as all having the same facial characteristics and skin colouring.

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SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

In Aboriginal societies, paintings (including body painting), music, songs and dance are always combined and linked through "The Dreaming". This cultural expression should therefore be viewed as a whole.

For many groups such as the Arremte of Central Australia, red is the sacred colour used in ceremonies and should be avoided.

Do not use a circle with a line through it, as it is sacred to the Adnyamanthanha people of the Flinders Ranges.

These are examples. People in your local community or Regional/State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups can provide more information.

TERMINOLOGY

There are many terms which may be offensive to Aboriginal people. Use the correct terms:

- "Aborigine" and "Aborigines" as nouns.
- "Aboriginal" as an adjective.
- The use of a combination such as "Aboriginal people" is preferred.
- do not use terms such as "prehistoric", "gin", "lubra", "half-caste," "part-Aboriginal", "abo", "tribe", "myth", "legend", etc.

THE DREAMING

Many Aboriginal people prefer the term "The Dreaming". It is the best English translation of very complex beliefs, which detail all that is known and all that is understood.

"Dreaming Story" should be used instead of myth, fable or legend.

Kaye Price
NAATSIS Project
February 1993

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aboriginal Cultures and the Visual and Performing Arts, SA Department of Education
Draft National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Project, 1992